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North County Cancer Cluster Dispute Heats Up at Radioactive Waste Meeting

A Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services employee admits her department does not have the means to execute a true and effective survey to determine a NoCo cancer cluster.

<http://florissant.patch.com/articles/north-county-cancer-cluster-dispute-heats-up-at-radioactive-waste-meeting>

By Candace Jarrett

The [James J. Eagan Community Center](#) played host to a room of people who said they aren't giving up or backing down, Thursday night.

"The federal government has poisoned us and it's their responsibility to take care of us," Kim Thone Visintine, who grew up in the area, said.

She along with other North County residents, past and current, filled the gymnasium to listen to governmental agencies update remediation and other efforts related to radioactive waste dumped in the area and spread through Coldwater Creek, as well as groundwater. Some of those in attendance no longer live in the area. Visintine drove from Detroit, Mich., to be at the meeting.

The defining moment of the meeting was when Cherri Bysinger spoke. Bysinger is with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS), which [released a report last month saying there was no evidence of a cancer cluster in the area](#). Tension was high due to conflicting views of the study and how data was collected, and by the end of the meeting, Bysinger admitted her department did not have the means to execute a true and effective survey to determine a cancer cluster for the area. **(Click on the first video in the photo gallery to view the video of the admission.)**

"This study was a screening assessment only," Bysinger said. "The type of in-depth survey of the area you guys are wanting, we don't do. You need to get a university involved to do that."

To which the crowd grew more irritated. Visintine said the federal levels of government should have been present since that is where the problem was created.

"We want your support to acknowledge that you don't have the capability to do the study correctly," Visintine said to the MDHSS. "Why was the data even posted when you knew it was flawed data?"

Visintine asked all the departments in attendance to help the residents further their cause to get attention at the federal level.

"Will you help us?" she pleaded with people representing the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), [Missouri Departments of Natural Resources](#) and [Health and Senior Services](#) and [the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry](#).

All agencies agreed to do what they could and steered the group towards getting a petition going to debunk the original Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services cancer cluster report.

About the St. Louis Oversight Committee and the Meetings

The St. Louis Oversight Committee hosts semi-annual meetings that allow residents in the area to speak face-to-face with people involved with the cleanup process at areas including in Hazelwood, with Coldwater Creek, as well as at and around [Lambert-St. Louis International Airport](#) and in North St. Louis City.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website, the St. Louis Oversight Committee hosts public meetings twice a year.

The St. Louis Oversight Committee is an independent group of community leaders consult on the cleanup of the St. Louis FUSRAP Sites. As a consultant, the committee provides comments, recommendations, and constructive criticism for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as it remediates contaminated areas.

What is the contamination?

The [Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program](#) (FUSRAP) began in 1974 to identify, investigate and clean up or control sites through the United States that had become contaminated from the nation's early atomic weapons and energy programs during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Activities were performed by the Manhattan Engineer District (The Manhattan Project), or under the Atomic Energy Commission, prior to the Department of Energy being formed.

As a part of these projects, the U.S. government contracted the Mallinckrodt Chemical Company to use its downtown facility to extract uranium from ore so it could be sent to other facilities. The extracted uranium was then sent to other facilities for enrichment. This occurred from 1942-1957. The program covers multiple sites in the St. Louis area both in St. Louis County and in St. Louis City.

The [St. Louis Downtown Site](#), (SLDS) is the source of the radioactive material. This location is where Mallinckrodt processed uranium for the U.S. government nuclear weapons complex. It was a 45-acre active chemical manufacturing facility located just 300 feet west of the Mississippi River.

The nuclear weapons' waste materials were stockpiled at several sites in North St. Louis County including at [Lambert-St. Louis International Airport](#). This site became known as the St. Louis Airport Site (SLAPS).

In the 1960s and 1970s, some of the waste material was sold to a private company, which transported the material to another location north of the SLAPS, and on Latty Avenue in the [City of Hazelwood](#). This site became known as the Hazelwood Interim Storage Site (HISS).

Together, the North County FUSRAP site consists of the SLAPS, HISS and 78 vicinity properties known as SLAPS VPs. The U.S. Department of Energy was responsible for the remediation of the FUSRAP sites from the late 1970s until 1998. At that time the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) (USACE) became the lead on the project.

Parts of Coldwater Creek are also a SLAPS Vicinity property. The creek has been affected by runoff from the FUSRAP sites. Coldwater Creek passes through several north St. Louis County communities including Florissant, Hazelwood, Black Jack and Spanish Lake. It was contaminated with uranium, thorium and radium.

NOTE - Due to the amount of information provided, there will be additional articles published throughout the upcoming week in an effort to release it all.